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Iowa in 20th-Century Wars: Can You Help Us Save the Stories?

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war, preachers dropped all reluctance to talk about war. One spoke of "The Crisis Before Us"; another, "The Bible and Sergeant York."

AFTER DECEMBER 7, the Davenport newspapers showed a new focus. Stories about local men in the Pacific appeared daily, and by December 16, the first reports of deaths would reach home. Davenporters began to adjust to a war-time life, in which war news would dominate the front pages of their newspapers for the next four years.

Yet life went on, played out by ordinary people and ordinary events. Newspapers continued to carry the stories of births, deaths, ball

scores, and the comics (Brick Bradford got away from the giant frog). The Friday after Pearl Harbor, Lawrence Welk and his orchestra played the Orpheum Theater in downtown Davenport, and new double features appeared on the movie screens.

Life did go on, but in some ways it irreversibly changed. The war that was announced in banner headlines in December 1941 would end nearly four years later in nuclear explosions, ushering in the Atomic Age. □

NOTE ON SOURCES

Primary sources are the *Davenport Democrat and Leader* and the *Davenport Daily Times* for the entire month of December 1941. This detailed look at Davenport was inspired by Stanley Weintraub's approach in *Long Day's Journey into War: December 7, 1941* (New York, 1991).

Iowa in 20th-century wars — **Can you help us save the stories?**

The State Historical Society of Iowa seeks donations that document Iowans' involvement in twentieth-century military affairs. The Society has little that documents the activities of soldiers in the two world wars, Korea, Vietnam, and the several smaller conflicts in the Caribbean and the Middle East. We have even less that documents the homefront, such as veterans and protest groups, women's contributions, war production, and rationing programs. And we have nothing that documents the activities and significance of a peacetime draft and the maintenance of a standing army.

The Society is interested in acquiring collections of personal papers, organizational and business records, photographs, and objects that will fill these gaps in our collections. Photographs, diaries, letters, or other kinds of personal writing can provide valuable insights on the impact of those wars on soldiers and on those who remained at home. Representative weapons and equipment (especially field uniforms) reveal details about the day-to-day life of an Iowa soldier. Business and farm records show how wars abroad affect farming, manufacturing, and the distribution of goods and services. The records of organizations devoted to veterans' affairs, peace and protest causes, and refugee relief and civil defense not only document the impact of war on our society, but also show the broader social and

cultural significance of maintaining armed forces in times of peace and the military's role in our lives and social values.

We welcome your inquiries regarding potential donations. Before calling the Society, gather all the background information you can about the items you wish to donate. Include a description of the items, their physical condition, and amount of material you might want to donate. Anything you know about the creation of the materials and their subsequent history and ownership is also important. Then call the Society's curators about objects (515-281-5111), or our manuscript archivists about papers and photographs (319-335-3916 or 515-281-5111).

Because the Society doesn't accept all materials, we will first evaluate your materials based on their content, condition, significance to Iowa history, and relationship to existing collections, and then decide whether to accept the donation. In general, we discourage restrictions on the access, use, or disposal of materials donated to us.

We will be glad to talk with you about your materials and to help you decide what might be appropriate for donation to Society collections.

—Eric Austin, Lora Bloom, and Michael Smith
State Historical Society of Iowa staff